Proposal and Divorce

not done. He must approach her through her father. He can and does, however, propose in person to a widow or a divorced woman.

After marriage the Badawin takes his bride to the tent he has previously pitched for her, close to that of her father, and consummation takes place. Many are the curious eyes and ears which are concentrated on the bridal tent.

As with us, those chiefly interested in the marriage ceremony are the other women of the camp.

Slaves marrying go through the same ceremonies as the freeborn, the master and mistress of the slave acting the part of the parents of the bridegroom: and as much interest is evinced in the marriage of one of their slaves as in that of one of the family.

The Badawin's love for cohabitation is well known, and as I have said elsewhere, sex is to him the supreme joy of life. Both bride and bridegroom indulge riotously in this honeymoon period. So wildly passionate is their love-making that I have known of a man breaking two of his wife's ribs on the first night of their marriage. As soon as the wife finds herself with child, she lets the other women know about it, and it becomes the occasion for much rejoicing. She continues cohabiting with her husband as a matter of course till just before the baby's birth.

DIVORCE

Divorce procedure is simplicity itself. The man need only say to his wife before witnesses that he does not want her any more. He has to make the statement three times for it to be valid: *Me arid ik, me arid ik, me arid ik.* No disgrace attaches to the woman, who takes the matter quite philosophically, and proceeds to look for another husband.

If the man divorces the woman, she keeps the *jehaj* he has given her, which is sufficient provision for her for a considerable time, or till she gets a second husband. It must not be forgotten that she has nearly always invested her *jehaj* in buying a camel or some sheep and has thus become an owner of livestock.

The point to emphasize is that no disgrace whatsoever clings to divorce, and if the girl is fair, or was the wife of a big shaikh, there is

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The Female Slave

Among Arabian potentates, slaves are also entrusted with the functions of personal guards and protectors to the ruler, by reason of their trustworthiness, and men like H.M. King ibn Sa'ud, the Sheikhs of Kuwait and Bahrain, maintain carefully selected negro bodyguards of greater or lesser strength for this purpose. State "executioners" are always slaves, for they can be counted on to carry out the ruler's decrees and orders to the letter, as the ordinary Arab cannot. Slaves have also on occasion been made useful to get rid of undesirable enemies, though such days fortunately are nearly past.

The lot of the female domestic slave in a nice family is an easy and a privileged one. She looks after her mistress and her robes, and always dresses her—she is often the cook, or seamstress, she goes down to the seashore and does the family washing with the younger women of the house, and accompanies her mistress on her calling expeditions. Like the male slave she often holds positions of considerable responsibility and trust. Both male and female slaves are naturally proud to be considered their master's and mistress's chosen guards and sometimes trade on this. They know too that their lord will avenge himself on any stranger who harms his slave, more than if he were his own son. This is literally true, for to kill or kidnap a man's slave affects his honour, not so the slaying of his son.

On the other hand, all householders and others owning slaves pretend to believe that a slave must be continually suppressed and reminded of his position if he is not to lose his head and get out of hand. The Arab will tell you that occasionally to show the heavy hand to a beloved slave is to keep him in proper state of mind.

So much for the town domestic slave. The bought slave (*mamlūk*) receives similar treatment from a good master, but speaking generally his life, where he exists (and this is not in Kuwait), is much harder. Unlike the domestic slave, he may be sold at the whim of the master, or given away like a horse or mare as a present to a friend.

SLAVERY AMONG THE BADAWIN TRIBES

Almost every desert shaikh, or well-to-do member of a tribe, has his male slaves, whether born in the family or bought, and their womenfolk have female slaves.

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Speaking generally, however, bought slaves are the rule.

A desert shaikh will keep a certain number of *'abíd* whom he has received as a gift from some prince or fellow-shaikh, or has himself bought in Mecca when on the Haj. A woman slave is called a *járiah* among the tribes, and not an *'abda*, which is the term used in the towns.

The Najd and Northern Badawin treat their bought slaves far better than the slave-owning fraternity generally. Being a born gentleman, and as a rule far more religious than his town brother, the desert man has a natural inclination to treat his slave well. The latter has, of course, to work and take his full share in drawing water for sheep and camels, and cutting brushwood for the use of the tent. Since he can stand the summer heat better than the Arab, he does a lot of the work connected with the care and tending of camels when his master and mistress are camped on water during the hot season.

As Mr. Rutter so forcibly puts it, the shaikh of a tribe is above all things patriarchal, he loves to feel that he is the head of the tribe, the father and mother of his own particular *kamula*. He gets satisfaction from feeling that members of his family, and especially his servants and slaves, are for ever dancing attendance on him, and depend on him for a thousand and one things connected with the daily round of life. He likes to think that at the two annual *'Ids* or festivals it will be he who will disburse largesse in the shape of presents of clothing (*kiswah*), foodstuffs (*za'am*) and so forth, to those depending on him. Just as he is always out to gain a following and increase it, because it gives him prestige, power and honour among his fellows, so he increases the number of his slaves where he can, as they give him definitely added strength in the eyes of his fellow Arabs.

According to Shaikh Hilal bin Faja'an of the Manáie (7th January, 1935) this is the code of the desert man where slaves are concerned:

(a) Slaves are good *shauil* (booty) or spoil when tribes are at war. In this sense they are counted as camels.

(β) Normally a body of riders on a camel-lifting expedition will not worry to carry off a single slave man found in charge of grazing camels. The raiders will supply him and leave him, as he would hinder rapid movement.

(γ) It is lawful, if you are at enmity with another tribe, to steal slave children and make them yours. Unwritten law insists, however, that such children be over ten years of age. Of course the owner

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567 will follow to the death in his efforts to effect a rescue, and will kill the rescuer if he can, even if he has to wait years to do so.

(d) If in a raid a freed slave (*mu'atiq*), male or female, be carried off in error, it is the duty of the raiders to return him or her as soon as the mistake is found out.

(e) No true Arab may lawfully marry a freed slave woman. His *ahl* will kill him if he so disgraces the tribal honour and blood.

The recognition of these rules, and several others, was confirmed on 11th August, 1936, by Shaikh Nahar al Mutalqim of the Al Hadi tribe of the 'Ajman, and also by Shaikh 'Ubaid al Murrayya al Hami of the Diyabin section of the Murrah, both of whom added the following interesting bit of information, which was new to me. They explained that the *'asil*, or pure-bred Arab, will never demean himself by having sexual connection with any of his bought female slaves. It is considered very *'aib* (disgraceful) to do so.

Unfortunately this excellent rule has been abused among certain noble and princely semi-Bedawin families such as the Al Sa'adun, and others, who argue that because a slave-girl is your property entirely, she is yours to do with as you like, without sin. The Bedawin proper, to his honour, refuses utterly to accept this method of arguing and calls it sophistry. It is one of the things that causes him to despise the *hadhari*, or town dweller, and take proportionate pride in himself.

[131] *Footnote*.—(a) There is a curious and widely accepted belief, among Arab seventeen especially, that to have connection with a virgin makes a man sexually strong over many (*quwat dhakra*), if he happens to be suffering from debility.

(b) Shaikh 'Ubaid al Murrayya al Hami knows that it is the immemorial right of his house to take away all slaves and slave captured in war or raid by any of his Diyabin tribesmen. This is a right rarely found among Bedawin tribes. Its existence was confirmed by Shaikh Hilal al Mutairi, of the same tribe.

(c) I have purposely not discussed the Georgian, Armenian and Circassian slave-girl, as a separate chapter would be required to deal with this class. Suffice to say that many beautiful women of this class exist among the ruling and rich classes of Arabia, Iraq and neighbouring Muslim countries. Their lot is not an unhappy one either, for as a rule they are bought very young and are treated with great consideration.